



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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WILD RICE SOWN AND  
HARVESTED FROM BOATS

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According to the usual practice recommended, seed should be kept dry from harvest to planting time, but the opposite condition is desirable in preserving the viability of wild rice, says the United States Department of Agriculture in Circular 229, Wild Rice, prepared by Charles E. Chambliss. For this reason, in buying seed it is important that the purchase be made from a dealer who guarantees that it has been stored under the right conditions.

The principal use of wild rice is as feed for wild ducks and other water fowl, but it is also used to a limited extent as human food, particularly by some of the Indian tribes of the upper Mississippi Valley. Because it attracts game birds it is sown on hunting preserves, the sowers going out in rowboats or canoes and spreading the seed over the water by handfuls. Mature seed is heavy and will sink <sup>immediately</sup> to the bottom and become imbedded in the mud. Spring sowing is the most satisfactory as seed that is sown in the fall is likely to be consumed by hungry ducks or geese.

The natural range of wild rice in North America extends southward from the northern end of Lake Winnipeg to the Gulf of Mexico and eastward to the Atlantic coast throughout these latitudes. In the northern part of this region it grows mainly in shallow lakes and sluggish streams, while in the eastern and southern part of the United States it thrives above brackish water on low marshes bordering most of the tidal rivers.

Wild rice may be started in beds and then transplanted. This method of getting a stand started in a location where the crop does not grow naturally is described in the circular.

For centuries the Indians of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Canada have harvested this crop by going out in canoes and shaking or knocking the ripe seeds into the boat. The white man with all his ingenuity employs the same method and probably will continue to do so until the plant is brought under cultivation. The Department of Agriculture is investigating the possibilities in the growing of the plant and in the circular reports that it is a good food and that it has a possible value as forage. Very little of the grain ever gets on the markets as the Indians sell only the small surplus they may have occasionally. It is considered a delicacy and is sometimes served with game by the best hotels. The plant has an ornamental value that should appeal to the landscape gardener.

Copies of the circular may be obtained by writing to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

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